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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ways in which multicultural art education, the curriculum of "Multiculturalism Canada" and a renowned instructional text lack indigenous consideration and ignore alternative concepts of scholarship of art history. Although multicultural education is considered important in Canada, the paper contends that there are significant problems in its implementation. Inappropriate rationale of the curriculum and insufficient knowledge have a tendency to promote stereotypes. In one example, the cross-cultural study of colors and symbols introduces the oversimplification and generalization of Chinese art. The analogy of Chinese and western art styles indicates an inappropriate methodology. The example shows that multicultural and cross-cultural art education requires more than just teaching the art of different cultures. Thorough cultural and historical investigation is needed for comparative studies, thus motivating further research on how to provide fundamental understanding of art in its social context for multicultural and cross-cultural art education. (EH)

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Stereotyping Chinese in Multicultural Art Education.

by Patricia Yuen-Wan Lin

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Stereotyping Chinese in Multicultural Art Education

Abstract

Although multicultural education is considered important in Canada, there are significant problems in its implementation. Inappropriate rationale of the curriculum and insufficient knowledge have a tendency to promote stereotypes. This paper shows how in multicultural art education, the curriculum of Multiculturalism Canada and a renowned instructional text lack indigenous consideration and ignore alternative concepts of scholarship of art history. In an example studied, the cross-cultural study of colours and symbols introduces the oversimplification and generalization of Chinese art. The analogy of Chinese and Western art styles indicates an inappropriate methodology. The example shows that multicultural and cross-cultural art education requires more than just teaching art of different cultures; it requires thorough cultural and historical investigation for comparative studies, thus motivating further research on how to provide fundamental understanding of art in its social context for multicultural and cross-cultural art education.

Stereotyping Chinese in Multicultural Art Education

Introduction

How do we teach non-Western art in a multicultural society? During the past three decades, the awareness that different cultures co-exist in a same society has captured the attention of North American educators. The fact that North America is largely constituted by immigrants from various nations has aroused numerous studies discussing "why" and "how" we teach different cultures in a multiethnic society. In art education, the importance of recognizing different cultures through art in a multicultural society is becoming a common topic in the literature of art education. While this "why" aspect of introducing art of different cultures is recognized among art educators, the "how" on teaching different cultures is emerging as important research issues.

This paper presents three aspects of multicultural art education. The first part of the paper explains the importance of learning and teaching different cultures in our art classroom. Anthropological approaches to art and theories of multicultural education form the basis of this explanation. Secondly, I briefly review the current literature on the content and prevailing approaches in curriculum development for multicultural art education. The final part examines two concrete approaches: the art curriculum of Multiculturalism Canada and a renowned instructional text by Chapman (1994). By using Chinese art as an example for non-Western art, I question both the rationale proposed in the booklet developed by Multiculturalism Canada and the method for introducing non-Western art in Chapman's text. I argue, through content analysis, for consideration of alternative concepts of art and art history in multicultural art curriculum. Based on a social-anthropological perspective to study art in its social context, my questions are: Does our current proposed curriculum miss fundamental elements on introducing non-Western art? In the implementation of multicultural art education, do our approaches oversimplify the complicated scholarship of Chinese art, and unintentionally lead us towards stereotyping non-Western culture?

The Importance of Multicultural Art Education

Anthropological approaches to studying art of different cultures and the theories of multicultural education justify the importance of multicultural art education. The anthropological approach identifies the role of art as a process that transmits human values and beliefs, rather than as an object for aesthetic contemplation. Art is also viewed as a communication system for social and cultural change. In art education, this anthropological framework was suggested by researchers, such as McFee and Degge (1970), Chalmers (1986), and Wasson, Stuhr, and Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990). They encourage recognizing the social meaning of art while studying art in its cultural context. By looking at art from the social-anthropological perspective, the relationship between art and culture is explored; the intention of human-made things, the purpose of conveying ideas and emotions among individuals and cultural groups bestow significant meanings for art making.

While the socio-anthropological aspects of art acknowledge that art manifests cultural differences among cultural groups, multicultural education theories emphasize the importance of equal distribution of power and resources among individuals in a culturally diverse society. Multiculturalism, with culture as the major theme, has become an issue at the forefront of education since the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Its definition and research scope still remain debatable among scholars. For example, some educators exclude issues of disabled people and certain ethnic, gender issues (Banks, 1992). However, in multicultural art education, the notion of "democracy" is adopted for visual statements (Brandy and Congdon, 1987). The freedom of expression and equality of human participation through art are fundamental beliefs of multicultural art educators. The notions of student empowerment and accountability of different perspectives of various groups have become interwoven in the art education fabric. Based on this democratic viewpoint, cultural diversity is recognized and the established, hierarchical elite art world is criticized. Art educators are consequently urged to ponder on the demographic changes of student population in North American society and the challenges of teaching art of various cultures.

Curriculum Development of Multicultural Art Education

The socio-anthropological foundation of art and the student-centered multicultural perspective have strong influences on the art curriculum proposed by art educators. There are many guidelines for a multicultural art classroom and different approaches to multicultural art curriculum in the literature of multicultural art education. Based on the above justification, there is consensus that educating cultural identities through art is important.

A brief historical review of multicultural art education will help to illustrate the current approaches in curriculum development and implementation of multicultural art education. Chalmers (1992) suggests that the origin of multicultural art education can be traced back to Barkan's argument on human values and art (Barkan, 1953). He further acknowledges McFee (1966) who first established a framework and her students who continued the elaboration of anthropological and sociological interpretation of cultures. McFee and Degge's (1977) proposal on studying similarities and differences of art and life among various periods and peoples also inspired art educators to develop approaches for cross-cultural studies. The voices of American minority art educators were another important contribution to multicultural art education. Grigsby (1977) and Young (1990) are both active educators focusing on art, culture, and ethnicity. The establishment of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural and Multicultural Research in Art Education* encouraged educators to debate and discuss various dimensions of multicultural curriculum development.

Two other important figures in multicultural art education were identified by Allison (1986). From the point of view of a British educator, Allison comments that Feldman and Chapman are the two most prominent individuals pushing North American art education toward a more socially and aesthetically accountable curricula. Feldman (1970) expanded the aesthetic dimension of art education to social possibilities. Art objects, according to his argument, are means to understand human concerns and issues. In Chapman's (1980) approaches to art education, she identifies awareness of the artistic heritage as one of the functions in art education. Along with the goals of "personal fulfillment through art" and "awareness of art in society" for art education, the awareness of artistic heritage is essential to understand one's own culture and other cultures that express values and beliefs through art. Chapman further suggests that the sensitivity towards appreciating different cultures is based on comparing and contrasting with one's own (1982).

After reviewing some influential ideas in multicultural art curriculum, I intend to summarize two guidelines and two approaches proposed by North American art educators for studying multiple cultures. The first guideline emphasizes student empowerment and the creation of community resources for art learning. It is from an anthropological perspective, and it extends the meaning of art into daily life experiences. The guideline, proposed for multicultural art classroom, encourages teachers and students to confront their own cultural identity and bias. The questions it raises provide guidance for teachers to design a localized unit lesson. Due to its recognition of students' daily life experiences as art experiences, the art curriculum leads toward a student-centered approach and provides for implementation of social action based on multicultural curriculum issues (Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson, 1992).

The second guideline is proposed by Chalmers (1992) and it addresses multicultural awareness through the practices of the four concomitant disciplines of art education: art making, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics, that are now a decade-old movement in art curriculum development. Chalmers combines an anthropological foundation with an ideology of multicultural education, thus providing guidelines for the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) curriculum. Derived from Banks' (1989) approaches for ethnic studies, Chalmers proposes that a DBAE multicultural curriculum should include not only issues and themes from multiple culturally perspectives, but also extend art as a form of social action.

In terms of how to teach different cultures in the curricula, there are two approaches that are closely related, yet distinct in multicultural art education. The first is an issue-oriented approach that supports cultural diversity by emphasizing the power of making visual statements. It encourages students in the art classroom to critically examine and debate matters of public concern through art objects. It focuses on awareness of political and social issues, and moves the artist's aesthetic experience towards the development of an ethical, gender, economic or social point of view. For example, the totem pole in an issue-oriented classroom may seed discussions concerning the effect of capitalism on the artist's position in the economy or the creation of totem poles for commercial purposes. In this approach, the functions of art education are to shape cultural identity and to promote political change. Sleeter (1988) labels this approach to curriculum development *social reconstructionism*. The two guidelines for multicultural art education discussed above belong to this approach. Questions of power are among the central issues discussed in this approach.

While the issue-oriented approach advocates an active social function of visual arts, the theme-oriented approach aims on experiencing cultural traditions through motifs and images. Once again, taking the totem pole as an example, the theme-oriented approach may suggest spiritual power as a theme, and may instigate discussions into the evolution of traditional techniques in sacred art among different cultures. In studio classes, this approach may suggest imaginary drawing or the creation of totem poles with animal forms (Billings, 1995). The theme-oriented approach recognizes symbols and themes as a way of communication, and the formal aspects of art and design can be studied cross-culturally. It gives greater emphasis to various cultural traditions and the aesthetic aspect of an art work, whereas the issue-oriented approach focuses more on how the art work influences the viewer. Both approaches to art education are derived from multiculturalism: one gearing toward social change while the other leading towards recognition of diverse cultures.

Stereotypes in Multicultural Art Education

Stereotype, according to social psychologists, is affiliated with prejudice. While prejudice is an attitude in human interaction, stereotype serves as a cognitive source to develop the attitude (Baron and Byrne, 1993). Among the different causes of prejudice, stereotype and illusory correlation are, in my opinion, related to education. Both are our responses to congregate with mates of our own kind, and prejudge of other kinds based on incoming information. In multicultural art education, the information that we teach about different cultures through visual art provides students "a picture in their head."

Art educators have studied the existence of stereotype and looked at ways of reducing it through multicultural art education. McFee and Degge (1977) point out that there are two kinds of stereotypes in art education. The first is the stereotype towards different ethnic groups. The second is associated with the traditional art history method. In the first, McFee and Degge suggest that common ethnic stereotypes target specific groups, such as Afro-Americans and Mexican-Americans. The authors advocate an alternate perspective to examine students' different cultural backgrounds by socio-economic culture within the same ethnic group. The values which are shared within a social class culture influence the ways people view on art.

McFee and Degge further comment that the traditional study of art---identifying the characteristics of art within each period of social and political history---creates the other stereotype in art education. This traditional approach, which divides art by categorizing art works by history and styles, provides us part of the knowledge we need. On urging the awareness of the dynamics of contemporary art, they comment that the traditional approach "solidifies our stereotypes of what periods of history and art were like. Although stereotypes make categorizing and organizing bodies of knowledge easier, we must be aware of the ways our stereotypes limit our view of a subject." (p. 272)

Reducing stereotype, for example, stereotype of the role of artists, or the meaning of art, has been one of the significant objectives in multicultural art curricula (Chalmers, 1992; Brandy and Congdon, 1987). However, does our current curriculum and instructional text help teachers to understand different cultures through art? Are our approaches suitable for non-Western art? In the following, I will address these questions and extend McFee and Degge's comment on stereotype caused by traditional Western art categories, by examining the interpretation of non-Western art.

Content Analysis on Multicultural Art Materials

In this section, I will analyze the art curriculum of Multiculturalism Canada and the Asian Art introduction in *Adventures of Art* by Chapman (1994). Using Chinese Art as an example, I argue that there are alternative concepts of colours, symbols, and stylistic development in Chinese art. My argument for an understanding of alternative concepts of art and art history in multicultural art education does not stand alone. In discussing multicultural concerns of the British National Curriculum, Daniel and Mason (1993) have raised three fundamental issues for a pluralist curriculum for art education. The issues are namely alternative conceptions of art, the artist, and meanings of art; alternative conceptions of Western sequential art history; and the aesthetic value that art are products of collective action. Using Indian art as an example, they suggested that art and design should be taught by considering the multilingual and multiracial nature of Indian society. My critique on the booklet developed by Multiculturalism Canada and the methodology of Chapman's text reinforces Daniel and Mason's contextual consideration of a multicultural art curriculum. Chinese art is another example that contributes to the issues of developing multicultural art curriculum.

Multicultural Education Through Art developed by Multiculturalism Canada is a booklet designed for teachers, child care workers, and community recreation leaders. Based on its rationale that visual art is a universal visual language, the booklet proposed two ways of studying different cultures. The first method is on investigation of the history of an art form, such as the historical development of paper making; the second method is to look at the symbolic application of various images and colours that convey emotions. While the former focuses on the historic view of material culture, the latter emphasizes on cross-cultural comparison on symbols and colours.

Multiculturalism Canada tries to cast a view of commonality among cultures by proposing to studying colors and symbols cross-culturally. The booklet reveals three aspects that are questionable. First of all, the statement that art is "a universal visual language" requires modification. This rationale was questioned by Grauer (1992) who argued that "if there is a universal language in visual arts, why do we need to study different art?" (p. 30) Common experiences and expressions through the process of making art exist among different groups; however, the interpretation of the art objects is culturally bounded by time, space, and the social landscape. Visual forms are manifestations of the attitudes, values, and beliefs of all cultures. Our response to art is usually limited by the degree to which we can understand the culture. Therefore, the rationale of Multiculturalism Canada appears to be an inappropriate assumption.

Secondly, the method which suggests studying colours and symbols cross-culturally is also problematic. The booklet suggests a cross-cultural study on folklore colour that expresses human feeling. It categorizes feelings of colours in different cultures, for example, red for the Chinese and the Ukrainian means joy and festivity; whereas red conveys anger, danger, or passion for the Europeans. The folklore colour comparison is a limited approach partly because folklore colours have different meanings within the same society (e.g. red has different meanings within the multi-ethnic Chinese society), and partly because it ignores the changing nature of the meaning of colour. A specific instance is the adoption of white as the colour of choice for a Chinese wedding instead of red due to westernization of contemporary Asian societies.

It is partly accurate to say that the colour red has been and still is associated with joy and festivity in Chinese folk culture up to the present day. Red is often associated with wedding and New Year festivals. The powerful red visual impact created in the Chinese film, *Raised The Red Lantern*, is an excellent example of how the colour speaks for the culture. However, this is only a small part of the representation that red conveys in Chinese culture. Among the multiethnic Chinese society, red can be bestowed with different meanings while combined with local language and beliefs. Colour has a complicated social function, which is not always associated with human feelings. Rather than conveying feelings, red can be interpreted as a colour of wealth which is shown by the gods of good fortune. Moreover, while combined with language of different regions, red is associated with many meanings, such as virginity, nakedness, and others. Red is also associated with a symbolic formula of Chinese painting (Eberhard, 1986). Examined within a social context, it is too much of a generalization to comment that red, for the Chinese, means "joy, and festivity." Colour plays a different role in Chinese culture than tooWestern culture. Since red is more closely associated with social status for the Chinese, is it accurate to simply state in the art curriculum that red signifies joy for the Chinese?

In a similar example, the booklet of Multiculturalism Canada says that yellow signifies joy and sunniness to Europeans while representing spirituality to Buddhist priests. However, the situation is more complex than stated. The colour yellow is associated with Chinese metamorphosis or "state of being" (which refers to the earth), and with the location of "middle". Because the Chinese considered China was the "Middle Kingdom", yellow was coupled with the Emperor, who ruled in the Middle Kingdom. For many centuries, common people were prohibited to wear yellow clothing. The Buddhist monks were an exception; however, even among them, colours indicated different sects and ranks. For example, in Tibetan Buddhism, the difference between the "red-hats" and the "yellow-hats" indicated various schools in Buddhism, and referred to the ranks of religious hierarchy. Colour has always been a symbolic language for the Chinese to subtly express their social status in an hierarchical society, which included the Buddhist spiritual world. Therefore, to simply assign single meanings to colour in a cultural context for is far too superficial.

Besides colour, the Chinese have developed specific animal symbols that embody a hierarchical social status. Symbols in art, in both the West and the East, are complicated images created by artists based on local customs and beliefs. Even within the same culture, the meaning of a symbol is multi-layered. Take the owl, which the booklet suggests as an example. It is simple to say that owl means wisdom in the West and foolishness in India. For the Chinese, however, the owl is an animal of ill-omen, a symbol of ingratitude to parents, but also protectors of the dead to demons. On interpreting symbols, we should be cautious that "symbolic images can mean different things to different peoples; how seldom, at least in art, are they endowed with a fixed, immutable core of meaning that transcends different social and religious milieus. This is not to deny the existence of unconscious archetypes as a source of symbolism, but simply to keep them in perspective and be aware of their limited importance in relation to the visual arts" (Hall, 1994, p. xii).

It is obvious that Multiculturalism Canada attempts to develop the concept of commonality among different cultures. It assumes that folk colour is a vehicle to convey human emotions and symbols which imply various cultural meanings. The attempt to address the commonality of human experiences is applaudable. However, the selection of folklore colours from different cultures tends to generalize that colour has a solo message (e.g. colours convey human emotions). The Chinese example manifests that colours and symbols have deep-rooted metaphysical social meanings and that they function at different levels according to beliefs and social customs. This awareness itself is an important part of the education process.

The second art instructional material examined is Laura Chapman's text *Adventures in Art* (teacher's edition, 1994). Among art educators who engage in multicultural art education, Chapman is known to have successfully applied both individual expressionistic values of art and the social context of art into curriculum development. In theory and in practice, Chapman is influential in developing curriculum structure and teaching strategies which address the various functions of art for the very young to secondary students. She argues that " the greatest need in art education is for instruction that illustrates the role of art in foreign cultures, as well as in contemporary life in America" (1982, p.35). This goal to promote awareness of artistic heritage for basic American education has led her to introduce foreign cultures into the art curriculum. Based on this objective, the teacher's edition of *Adventures in Art* interweaves four components of learning art by engaging in art making, art appreciation, art history, and awareness of art in everyday life. Based on these four aspects of learning art, Chapman develops unit lessons that incorporate her belief with the DBAE approach to curriculum development.

When introducing Asian art in the appendix for the teacher's edition, Chapman puts Asian art under the category of "teaching about styles, periods, and world cultures." Parallel with the Western traditional art styles, such as ancient Greek or Baroque style, Asian art was described chronologically and divided into three major regions, namely India, Japan and China.

There are two problems with Chapman's introduction on Asian art. First, the general notion of Asian art she describes omits the major scholarly traditions of Japan and China. The paragraph starts with " Much of the traditional art of Asia has been influenced by the Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic religions." Although true, it does not reflect the fundamental parts of Asian art. When we examine the curriculum of Japanese and Chinese art history in both Asian and Western educational institutions, most of the courses offered are related to the Confucius influenced literati tradition (literally, scholar painting tradition), instead of Buddhist art. Because the role of artists, motivation of art making, and process of art making bestow upon the Japanese and Chinese their unique traditions, the literati tradition is the most important part of understanding Far Eastern culture through art. Ignoring the literati tradition, and saying that much of the traditional Asian art is influenced by religion, is similar to ignoring the role of individuality in Western art history since the Renaissance.

This shortcoming of omitting the literati tradition is further demonstrated in the artists category of the same appendix. Among artists from different cultures, four Chinese and Japanese artists are introduced in the artists' appendix. Two are Japanese wood block printers, and two are literati painters. None of the mentioned artists chosen are related to Buddhist art. The only Chinese painter chosen in the artists list is a 14th century painter and calligrapher, whose painting themes represent the traditional literati landscape painting. This example shows that the stated idea which describes Asian art world could not be supported by the artists of the traditional art.

My other critique of Chapman's introduction of Chinese Art is the analogy that she compared Chinese with Western styles and periods. Personally, I agree that one of the best ways to understand different cultures is based on comparing and contrasting one's own cultural understanding and identity. However, the problem arises when Chinese art is inadequately compared with the traditional Western art categories, namely styles (e.g. Qing vs Baroque) and periods (e.g. Tang vs. Renaissance). This Western approach identifies characteristics of art with social and political history, and classifies art by people and periods. While the approach is under debate among art historians (Pointon, 1992), art educators are also aware that the approach may could encourage stereotypes (McFee and Degge, 1977; Daniel and Mason, 1993). Moreover, the research methodology of Asian art history, a scholarship developed by western scholars, is still under endless debates among Western and Chinese scholars. While the study of Chinese art has been questioned of having double standard in an American-European context (Powers, 1995), the analogy of Tang and Renaissance scholarship, Qing and Baroque art appears to be inappropriate.

Once again, take the Chinese literati tradition for example. To equivocate Qing literati landscape with the Baroque style is an irrelevant comparison. Baroque, according to Chapman, is often associated with a decorative, flowery, and flamboyant style in Western art. In Chinese painting, alternative concepts appear in art. In terms of appreciation, the West emphasizes the formal element of art and design (line, colour, composition, perspective, etc...), whereas the Chinese describe painting based on the holistic atmosphere rendered by poetry, calligraphy in the painting. None of the Baroque styles is describable for the Qing painting tradition. In Chinese art, there is only the decorative patterns of Qing ceramics that is similar to the Baroque style.

With the introductin of Chinese ceramics, the problem is then further complicated, because according to Western tradition, ceramics is not considered as an art form. Is it appropriate, then, to compare different artifacts under the same category? Stereotype, according to Allport (1954), is "an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p. 191). In implementing multicultural art theories to classroom practice, I suspect the comparison based on the categories of Western art history is creating, rather than breaking down, confusion to non-Western cultures.

The content analysis above shows that the alternative conceptions of art, artist, and art history are ignored. Written for English speaking school teachers, Chapman's textbook gives an oversimplified information on Asian art. Despite the fact that there is limited time and space for introducing minor cultures in the classroom (as opposed to the North American mainstream cultures), I believe there are fundamental concepts missed in the textbook. Having little knowledge on cultures is a questionable basis for teaching. Anne Smith (1993), an art historian and educator, warns that " the desire to simplify information in some art education texts leads to an over-simplification and ultimately to a misunderstanding---even a falsification---which robs an image of its complexity, mystery, and power" (Simth, 1993, forword).

Conclusion

While anthropological and multicultural education theories provide us the framework to select priority cultures to teach according to the students' background, the approach on how to develop multicultural art curriculum for different cultures is still under discussion. By using Chinese art as an example, I argue that the current art curriculum and instructional material are problematic and misleading for multicultural art implementation. Due to the lack to indigenous consideration and ignorance of alternative concept of scholarship of art history, art educators should be aware that these oversimplifications and generalizations potentially lead us towards stereotyping cultures.

This paper also questions the most common, yet most important issue in curriculum development: what is the most worthwhile for learners to know and experience? We, as educators who are encouraged to celebrate cultural diversity and to help students to respect their own and others' culture, need to go through the select process of identifying the fundamental concepts and experience of other cultures. Grumet (1991) said that " choosing and naming of what matters and the presentation of those values for the perception and engaged participation of others are the deliberations that constitute curriculum development" (p.75). If North American art educators determine that Asian art matters for students from multiethnic cities like New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, or Vancouver, then responsibility for the content of the subject matter should be required. Otherwise, the simplified and generalized information provided in the booklet and textbook for teachers is like a monthly visit to a Chinese restaurant in town. A taste of ethnic cuisine does provide the exotic flavor of a culture, but it is too shallow for an educational purpose to understand and appreciate the culture.

I believe that visual arts provide a strong connection between our environment and everyday life. The cultural and social messages of visual art bestow a powerful meaning in a multicultural society. On interpreting different cultures, art educators need to be aware of the responsibility of choosing specific cultures to teach. Stereotype comes from an ignorant and shallow understanding of human history. Multicultural art education, like many other subject matters in Humanities and Social Science, is a study based on thorough scholarly analysis and contemplation to learn and teach people how to understand more about each other. It not only requires one's passion and intellect, but also a sincere attitude and life long commitment. According to the examples of this study, I hope that art educators can develop a wider scope to look at non-Western art and examine the culture with responsibility. Since studying non-Western art do not compatible with the mainstream Western art instruction, we should be aware that little knowledge is dangerous at the selective process of curriculum development. This study suggests that identification of fundamental concepts of specific cultures is needed in our art curriculum. Using analysis of the fundamentals of studying the art making and art history as a basis, further cross-cultural studies can enhance our understanding on the implementation of multicultural art education.

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